

## **"Philosophy in the Studio": 1-day symposium on Contemporary Philosophy of Architecture.**

**VENUE:** BERLAGE ZAAL, Bouwkunde Delft / 1 April  
2014, 11:00-17:00

A joint venture of Prof. Michiel Riedijk, [Chair of Architecture](#) at BK/TUD, and Profs. Van der Poel and Kroes of the [Section of Philosophy](#), TPM/TUD, and a 'kick off' event for the international conference on 'Ethics in Architecture and Urbanism' at Delft in July 9-11, 2014 (see [isparchitecture.com](http://isparchitecture.com), 'Events')

Mies quoted Plato and Aquinas to explain his architecture, Le Corbusier tapped into Kant's aesthetics to unravel his revolutionary vision of architecture. But where is the philosophy of architecture today?

To probe this question, TU Delft presents speakers currently at the fore front of this exciting, nascent field. Key presentations are given by Branko Mitrovic, author of the best selling 'Philosophy for Architects' in Princeton's 'Elements of Architecture' Series, and ETH Zürich's Christoph Baumberger, leading the latest anthology on the topic. Six more speakers, including them professionally trained philosophers and architects with known expertise in the field, will present their latest research too. Together they probe whether philosophy holds a place in the architecture studio at all, and more generally, which questions the two disciplines open up for each other.

The venue is there to pique interest among students wanting to learn more about architecture philosophy today. But it is also there to discuss the opportunities of the use of philosophy in the context of architecture education - and hence is openly geared at studio instructors with mixed experiences of the use of philosophy in the studio today.

Places are limited, so please **REGISTER** with [s.koller@tudelft.nl](mailto:s.koller@tudelft.nl)

### **PROGRAM**

#### **OPENING**

11:00 Doors open.

11:10 to 11:20 Welcome remarks TPM - Stefan Koller (TPM Delft, NL)

11.20 to 11.30 Welcome remarks BK - Tom Avermaete (BK Delft, NL)

#### **MORNING SESSION.** Moderator: Tom Avermaete

11:30 - 12:20: Branko Mitrovic (NTU Trondheim, NO)

12:20 - 12:50: Carolyn Fahey (ISPA, UK)

12:50 - 13:20: Sabine Roeser (TPM Delft, NL)

#### **LUNCH BREAK**

13:20 - 14:10

#### **AFTERNOON SESSION.** Moderator: (tbc)

14:10 - 15:00 Christoph Baumberger (ETH Zürich, CH)

15:00 - 15:30 Pieter Vermaas (TPM Delft, NL)

15:30 - 16.00 Andrej Radman (BK Delft, NL)

16:00 to 16.30 Jacob Voorthuis (BK TU Eindhoven, NL)

#### **CLOSING PANEL.** Moderator: Stefan Koller

16:30 to 17:00

## **ABSTRACTS: MORNING SLOT**

**BRANKO MITROVIC**

### **Philosophy and Architecture in Contemporary Architectural Education**

My presentation surveys the problems and dilemmas pertaining to the introduction of philosophical contents in architectural education. Paradoxically, since the 1980s (at least), the culture of architectural academia has been marked by substantial hunger for philosophical material on the one hand and a refusal to engage with philosophical arguments on the other. I will try to analyse the trends within architectural academia that have led to this situation, as well as the nature of the material that architects could have received from philosophers. A philosopher may be frustrated by the impression that architects merely want philosophical phrases and citations that they can recycle in the narratives they produce to talk about their works. But it is also true that until recently, due to the influence of the linguistic turn, the dominant streams of analytic and continental philosophy have been programmatically anti-visual and had few genuinely interesting arguments to offer to architects. Finally, I will argue that changes in contemporary philosophical culture promise a much more fruitful relationship between the two disciplines in the future.

**CAROLYN FAHEY**

### **Architecture's Color Games: investigating Wittgenstein's color philosophy**

Wittgenstein's spatially defined investigations of transparency provide the basis for understanding how accounts of color in architecture are present and active. Through a series of investigations Wittgenstein engages color as an experiential phenomenon of our being in the world. He engages many ordinary questions surrounding the physics of energy, the physiology of the body, and the propensities of cognition, arriving at a position in which color is a concept in itself. The color concept itself, the point of departure in this analysis, is a socio-cultural construction, constructed through language-games and its grammar. The analysis presented here looks to architecture's contemporary language-game in an effort to both to identify contemporary color concepts and to reveal these concepts' role and position in the contemporary situation. In doing so, spatial interpretation is shown as the means through which a color concept has both meaning and use in architecture.

**SABINE ROESER**

### **The Role of Art in Moral-Emotional Reflection on Technological Risks**

Current debates about technological risks such as nuclear energy, climate change and genetic modification are frequently heated and end up in stalemates, due to the scientific and moral complexities of these risks. In my previous research I have shown why and how taking emotions seriously is crucial in debates about technological risks, because emotions point out what morally matters. In this presentation I will examine the role that works of art can play in enticing moral emotions concerning technological risks. Works of art can enhance emotional moral reflection by making abstract problems more concrete, letting us broaden narrow personal perspectives, exploring new scenarios, going beyond boundaries and challenging our imagination.

Recently, artists have become involved with risky technologies, such as Adam Zaretsky in the context of genomics, and William Verstraeten, the artist who designed the acclaimed building of the Dutch nuclear waste

organization, COVRA. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have started to study the role of art in relation to technology, but they do not focus on emotions. There are empirical studies on the role of images, narratives and emotions in climate change risk perception, but they do not focus on art. Philosophers who study the role of art for emotional-moral reflection focus on interpersonal relationships. However, the context of technological risks gives rise to important conceptual and normative questions about art and moral emotions. In this presentation I will sketch possible lines of philosophical investigation.

## **ABSTRACTS: AFTERNOON SLOT**

**CHRISTOPH BAUMBERGER**

**Philosophy of Architecture: Its Relation to Architectural Theory and its Place within Philosophy**

In the last few years, it has occasionally been suggested to acknowledge the philosophy of architecture as a new philosophical sub-discipline which embraces the various philosophical approaches to architecture. My presentation scrutinizes how well founded this proposal is, and how one could develop it further. Hence, I open with a general characterization of the philosophy of architecture as a field to be distinguished from architectural theory and to be placed within philosophy. In the first part, I discuss several attempts to distinguish it from architectural theory by means of author-related or content-related criteria, and propose - as an alternative - to effect that distinction by appeals to more formal criteria. In the second part, I turn to the aesthetics and the ethics of architecture as the two best established branches of the philosophy of architecture. I characterize these branches by suggesting a list of issues they are dealing with, and discuss whether philosophical inquiry into architecture requires distinct fields of applied aesthetics and of applied ethics. Finally, I argue that it is useful to conceive of the philosophy of architecture as a distinct philosophical discipline with the aesthetics and the ethics of architecture as two of its sub-disciplines.

**PIETER VERMAAS**

**Taking Architectural Claims More Seriously: Philosophy and Research Methodology**

Philosophy may contribute to architecture by analysing claims made in architecture, by identifying their empirical content and by giving methods to test their truth. My case is a claim made as part of the development of computer supported tools for architectural design. The claim concerned a Shape Grammar Systems that can generate designs for refurbishing *Rabo-de-Bacalhau* apartments, a type of apartment of which there are about 30.000 instances in the city of Lisbon. The claim made is that the quality of the generated designs is equal to that of designs made by human architects. In architecture this claim, rather than being assessed, resulted in angry discussions about the threat it may pose to the profession. Philosophy can help determining whether the claim is actually true by analysing what it means and identifying ways to test it, as I will sketch in my contribution.

**ANDREJ RADMAN**

**Ecosophical Cartography: Space Always Comes After, It Is Good Only When It Comes After**

The degree zero of spatial experience occurs at the level of the unconscious and is proto-subjective and sub-representational. In terms of architectural thinking everything begins from the sensible. However, the task of speculative thinking is to go beyond the sensible to the potentials that make sensibility possible. After all, the basic medium of the discipline of architecture, as we see it, is the 'space of experience'. This *spatium*, which is not to be confused with the 'experience of space', does not pre-exist but subsists as a virtuality. Once aesthetics is drawn into the context of production its realm expands to become a dimension of being itself. Both subjects and objects come to be seen as derivative. Consequently, the mereological relationship - which is perfectly suitable for the realm of the extensive - needs to be radically revamped in order to become capable of capturing topological transformations. But what we are advocating is not a formalisable model. Quite the contrary, any technological determinism needs to be kept at bay. What is needed instead is heuristics as a practice of material inference. However disadvantageous this may seem to the architect, it will prove not to be so once we fully grasp the Affective Turn and its implications for the discipline. It might become apparent that it is through habit, rather than attention, and collectivity, rather than individualism, that we find the (royal) road to the understanding of 'space', or better still, that we take a (minor) apprenticeship in *spatialisation*.

**JACOB VOORTHUIS**

**Thinking, practice, and the production of social space**

Philosophy should surely be concerned with the analysis and critique of questions regarding any aspect of any discipline. Philosophy in architecture might then concern itself with the analysis and critique of questions concerning architecture as a human product and design as an aspect of human endeavour. Architecture's engagement with theory and practice form the subject of philosophical discourse; philosophy asks questions, submitting every theory and any instance of practice to scrutiny. As Alain Badiou pointed out: philosophy is the thinking of theory and practice (Badiou, 2006). A question any philosopher teaching in a school of architecture might then wrestle with is: how do we usefully involve philosophy in teaching architecture and developing a research-based design ethos?

With the help of two case studies, Master Design Projects conducted over the last academic year, this paper will propose a discursive method in which students' engagement with philosophy is made concrete, workable and above all useful within a studio setting. The discursive approach proposed here, of which the game rules will be elucidated and elaborated upon later on, makes possible a socially and architecturally relevant interaction between thinking and practice, allowing students to sharpen their theoretical stand with regard to the role of architectural design in society and to critique their design decisions within its framework.